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prepared by trituration with a pebble or rubbing with the fingers, usually in a shell cup. Sometimes the shell used for the purpose is the valve of a *Cardium*, which serves indiscriminately as cup, spoon, skin-scraper, etc; but preference is apparently given to thick and strong shells, such as the wave-worn valve of *Chama* (?), shown in plate XXVII, figure 7, which are consecrated to the use and eventually buried with the user, together with a supply of the paint (like that illustrated in the cane cylinder—figure 4—which was a mortuary sacrifice). The gypsum is usually carried in natural slabs or other fragments, perhaps rounded by wear (plate XXVII, figures 6 and 8); it is prepared by wetting and rubbing two pieces together, the larger being reduced to metate shape by the operation. The dumortierite was observed only in the form of a pencil made by pulverizing the substance and mixing with sufficient clay to give consistency. The several pigments are applied wet by means of human-hair brushes kept for the purpose, the process occupying from half an hour to three or four hours for the more elaborate designs. So far as observed at Costa Rica in 1894, the paints were mixed in water only; but since painting outfits found on Tiburon island in 1895 were smeared with grease, it is probable that either water or fats may serve for menstrua, at the convenience of the artists. Commonly the process of painting is measurably cooperative. The matron usually depicts her device on the faces of her daughters up to the age of 12 or 15 years, when they learn to make the applications themselves; and frequently two or more women (usually those with similar devices) work together in preparing and applying the pigments, each laying the paint on her own face and apparently guiding her hand partly by the sense of feeling and partly by suggestions from her coworkers; but Candelaria and some other of the younger women at Costa Rica frequently worked alone, aided by a mirror in the form of a shallow bowl of water set in the shadow while the brilliant desert glare fell full on the face.

The mines yielding the pigments were not located. The geologic conditions are such that the ochers are undoubtedly abundant; but it is probable that the gypsum is uncommon and confined to a remote locality or two, and that the dumortierite is rare and scanty here as elsewhere. The care with which the paints are preserved, prepared, and applied, the fact that they are indispensable feminine appurtenances even on the longest journeys, and their sacred rôle in the mortuary customs, all combine to indicate that they are among the most highly prized possessions of the people and by far the most precious of their minerals.

The sematic functions of the designs are esoteric, yet an inkling of their meaning was obtained through Mashém, the interpreter at Costa Rica in 1894; from his expressions it appears that the designs are sacred insignia of totemic character, serving to denote the clans of which the tribe is composed. But three clans were identified, and

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life of the tribe rotates: since the clans never reside and rarely camp nearer than 3 to 15 miles from the aguaje, a large part of the water consumed must be transported great distances in these vessels; since the region is one of extreme aridity, the lives of small parties often depend on the integrity of the olla and on the care with which the fragile vessel is protected from shock or overturning; and hence the utensil must occupy a large if not a dominant place in everyday thought—indeed, the fact that it does so is attested by constant custom and also by its employment as the most conspicuous among

FIG. 14—Rattlesnake necklace.

the mortuary sacrifices. Thus, the relation of the Seri olla to its makers and users is parallel with that of the ever-present earthen pot to the Pueblo people, or that of the cooking basket to the acorn-eaters of California, save that its relative importance is enhanced by the fewness of activital lines and motives in Seri life. Moreover, this most characteristic utensil is established and hallowed in Seri thought by immemorial associations: its sherds are sown over the hundred thousand square miles of ancient "despoblado" from Tiburon to Caborca, Magdalena, Rio Opodepe, and Cerro Prieto, and are scattered through the 20 feet of shells forming Punta Antigualla (perhaps the oldest shell mound of America); and all the sherds from the range

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by faith and attendant ceremony; for the doubly consumed food is credited with intensified powers and virtues, and held to be specially potent in the relief of hunger and in giving endurance for the hard warpath or prolonged chase; it is—and makes—very strong ("mucho fuerte"), in the laconic and confident explanation of Mashém. Incongruous as the custom is to higher culture, it finds natural suggestion in the everyday habits of the tribe, who are wonted not only to the eating of animal entrails in raw and uncleaned condition, but especially to the relief of the sharpest pangs of hunger by means of the soft structures and their semiassimilated contents—an association of much influence in primitive thought. Concordantly with the custom and the faith grown out of it, the excreta in general take a prominent place in the Seri mind; the use of urine in ablution, etc, is little understood and may be passed over; but all bony feces—and it may be noted that the "sign" of the Seri more resembles that of wolves or snake-eating swine than that of men—following gorges of large quarry are customarily located and kept in mind for recourse in time of ensuing shortage, when the mass is ground on the shat and reconsumed; and even the ordinary discharge is preserved during the seasons of less reliable food supply.

There is an obscure connection between this curious and repulsive food custom of the Seri and the mortuary customs of the tribe, which

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to finish it. Twenty-four pounds of meat in twenty-four hours is not deemed an extraordinary ration for a single person, and to see anything eatable before him is a temptation for a Californian which he cannot resist, and not to make away with it before night would be a victory he is very seldom capable of gaining over himself."

Clavigero's account of the food-habits of the California Indians is similar, though generally less explicit. According to him the seeds forming the "second harvest of pitahayas" are extracted carefully while fresh, and are afterward roasted, ground, and preserved in the form of meal against the opening winter. Of the raw-swallowing habit, he says:

"The savages living in the northern part of the peninsula have found the secret, unknown to mortals in general, to eat and re-eat the same meal repeatedly. They tie a string around a mouthful of meat dried and hardened in the sun. After chewing it for a while they swallow it, leaving the string hanging from the mouth. After two or three minutes, by means of the string they draw the meat up again to be re-chewed, and this they repeat as many times as may be necessary until the morsel is empowered or so softened that the string will not hold it any longer. In extracting it from the throat they make such a noise that to one who has not before heard it it appears that they are choking themselves.

"When many individuals are gathered together to eat in this manner it is practised with more vehemence. They seat themselves on the ground, forming a circle of eight or ten persons. One of them takes the mouthful and re-swallows it, and afterwards draws it up again and passes it to the next one, and this one to another, proceeding then around the circle with much enjoyment until the morsel is consumed. This has astonished the Spaniards who have seen it, and indeed it would not be credible if it had not been unanimously testified to by all who have been in that country. Several Jesuits who did not believe this, notwithstanding that sincere and prominent persons confirmed it, having afterwards gone to California saw it with their own eyes. Among those Indians who have embraced Christianity this loathsome and dangerous method of eating has been abandoned in consequence of the continual reproofs of the missionaries." (Historia de la Antigua ó Baja California, obra postuma del Padre Francisco Javier Clavijero. Mexico, 1852, p. 24.)

The records of Clavigero and Baegert indicate fair correspondence in the food habits of the Californian Indians and the Seri, though there are certain noteworthy differences, e. g., the tabu of the badger among the former and of the ground squirrel among the latter; it would also appear that the Californians were the more largely vegetarian and the latter advanced in culinary processes. The customs of the Seri throw light on the genesis of "re-eating", for the process would appear to be but an extension of the repeated mouthing and swallowing of tendinous strings still attached to the bones of larger animals.

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was not detected until the opportunity for personal inquiry had gone by. About the rancherias on Isla Tiburon, and especially about the extensive house-group at the base of Punta Tormenta, there are burial places marked by cairns of cobbles, or by heaps of thorny brambles where cobbles are not accessible; and most of these cairns and bramble-piles are supplemented by hoards of desiccated feces carefully stored in shells, usually of *Arca* (a typical specimen is illustrated in figure 25). The hoards range from 50 to 500 shells in quantity, and there were fully a score of them at Punta Tormenta alone. About the newer rancherias, as at Rada Ballena, where there are no cemeteries, the hoards are simply piled about small clumps of shrubbery. The meaning of the association of the dietetic residua and death in the Seri mind is not wholly clear; yet the connection between the "strong food" for the warpath and the

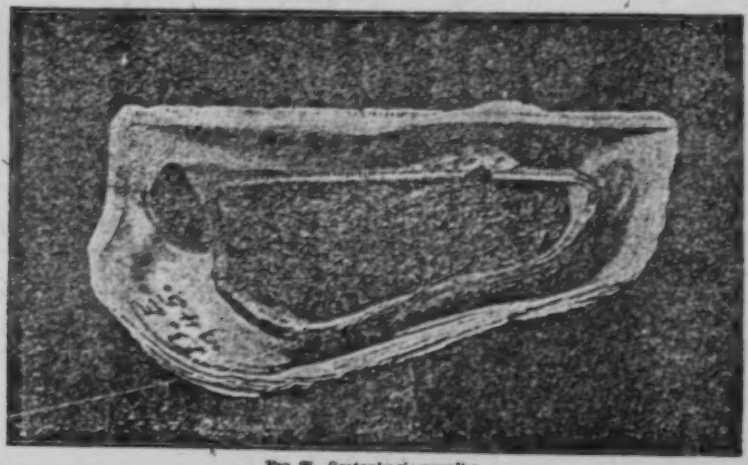

FIG. 2—Scatophagic supplies.

mystical food for the manes in the long journey to the hereafter is close enough to give some inkling of the meaning.[1]

In recapitulating the food supplies of the Seri it is not without interest to estimate roughly the relative quantities of the several constituents consumed; and the proportions may be made the more readily comprehensible by expression in absolute terms. As a basis for the quantitative estimate, it may be assumed that the average Seri, living, as he does, a vigorous outdoor life, consuming, as he does, a diet of less average nutrition than the selected and cooked foods of higher culture, and attaining, as he does, an exceptional stature and strength, eats something more than the average ration; so that his ration of solid food may be lumped at 2.75 pounds (about 1,250 grams) daily, or 1,000

[1] Cf. Scatologic Rites of all Nations, by Captain John G. Bourke, 1891, especially chapter II, pp. 439-469. The Seri custom, resting on it does, on an ordinary economic basis, tends to explain the scatophagy of the Hopi and other tribes described by Bourke.

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conspicuous records of its latest uses; both faces (more especially the pitted one) are stained with sap from green vegetal substance (probably immature mesquite pods), while one face is brilliantly marked with ocher in such manner as to indicate that a lump of face-paint was partially pulverized by grinding on the slightly rough surface. It was found, together with the ahst illustrated in plate XXXVIII, in the rear of a recently occupied jacal midway between Punta Antigualla and Punta Ygnacio, cached beneath a thorny cholla cactus uprooted and dragged thither for the purpose. The trail and other signs indicated that the jacal had been occupied for a few days and up to within twenty-four hours by a family group of six or seven persons; that it was vacated suddenly at or about the time of arrival of the party of five whose trail was followed by the 1895 expedition from Punta Antigualla to Punta Miguel (where they were interrupted in the midst of a meal and frightened to Tiburon); and that the larger party fled toward the rocky fastnesses of southern Sierra Seri.

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Of the foregoing hupfs several are aberrant, and serve merely to illustrate the prevailing directions of departure from the optimum form and size of implements. Six of the specimens may be deemed typical; they are as follows:

| Plate No. | Locality | Material | Weight | Condition |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Lb. Oz. | |
| XLIII..... | Costa Rica ..... | Quartzite . | 1 14 (0.86 kg.). | Nearly natural. |
| XLIV ..... | Campo Navidad .... | Tuff..... | 1 1 (.48 kg.) ... | Four-fifths natural. |
| XLVI ..... | Pozo Escalante..... | Vesicular lava. | 1 13 (.82 kg.) .. | Nearly natural. |
| XLV ..... | Punta Miguel ..... | Granite ... | 1 10 (.74 kg.) .. | One-fifth natural. |
| LV ..... | Punta Narragánsett | ....do ..... | 1 11 (.77 kg.) .. | One-fourth natural. |
| LVI ..... | South point Sierra Seri. | Andesite .. | 1 15 (.98 kg.) .. | One-third natural. |

From these specimens a type of Seri hand implement may easily be formulated: it is a wave-worn pebble or cobble of (1) granite, quartzite, or other tough and hard rock, (2) tuff, or other light and pulverulent rock, or (3) vesicular lava; it is of flattened ovoid form, or of biscuit shape; it weighs a trifle under 2 pounds (about 0.85 kilogram); originally the form and surface are wholly natural, but through the chance of use it is modified (*a*) by a battering of the ends and more projecting edges, and (*b*) by grinding and consequent truncation of the sides; though initially a natural pebble, chosen nearly at random from the beach, it eventually becomes personal property, acquires fetichistic import, and is buried with the owner at her death.

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The ahsts and the heavier cobbles used alternatively as ahsts and hupfs are too fortuitous for reduction to type; while the protean peb-

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31



condition characterized by absence of property and thrift-sense; while its most essential concomitant is extratribal antipathy too bitter to permit toleration of alien blood, or even of alien presence save under the constraint of superior force.

## MORTUARY CUSTOMS

The prevailing opinion among the better informed Caucasian neighbors of the Seri is that the tribesmen display an inhuman indifference to their dead; and this opinion is one of the factors—combining with current notions as to cannibalism and arrow-poisoning and beastlike toothing in battle—involved in the widespread feeling that the tribesmen are to be accounted as mongrel and uncanny monsters rather than human beings.

The opinion that the Seri neglect their dead on occasion would seem to rest on a considerable body of evidence; Mendoza's record of the numberless neglected corpses of warriors polluting the air and poisoning the streams of Cerro Prieto in 1737 would seem to be unusual only in its fulness; and Señor Encinas, albeit so conservative as to repudiate the reputed anthropophagy and to recognize better qualities among the folk than any contemporary, declares that they are utterly negligent of their dead, save that when the bodies lie near rancherias heaps of brambles are thrown over them to bar—and thus to lessen the disturbance from—prowling coyotes. Quite indubitable, too, is the specific testimony of vaqueros to the effect that Seri raiders overtaken by the Draconian penalty of the frontier merely lie where they fall, even when this is well within reach of the tribesmen, Don Andrés Noriega's verification of his boast (ante, p. 113) being an instance in point. On the other hand stands the conspicuous fact (unknown to the frontiersman) that well marked cemeteries adjoin some of the rancherias of interior Seriland. The sum of the somewhat discrepant evidence accords with a characteristically unsatisfactory statement by Mashém, to the effect that the mourning ceremonies are important only in connection with women—i. e., matrons—because "the woman is just like the family" ("la muger es como la familia"); and this intimation, in turn, is corroborated by the single known instance of inhumation in Seriland, as well as by certain indirect indications connected with the scatophagic customs (ante, p. 213). On the whole it seems certain that the mortuary ceremonies attain their highest development in connection with females, the recognized blood-bearers and legislators of the tribe.

The special dignification of females in respect to funerary rites is without precise parallel among other American aborigines, so far as is known, but is not without analogues in the shape of (presumptive) vestiges of a former magnification of matrons in the mortuary customs of certain tribes. The vestiges are especially clear among the Iroquoian Indians, whose aboriginal society coincided with that of the

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31



Seri at various points; witness the following passage from the Onondaga mourning ritual, as collected and translated by Hewitt:

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Now, moreover, again, another thing, indeed, our voices come forth to utter; and is it not that that we say, that far yonder the Hayaner [chief of highest grade] who labored for us so well is falling away as falls a tree? So, moreover, it is these things that he bears away with him—this file of mat-carriers, warriors all; visible and present here; also this file of those who customarily dance the corn-dances [the women]—they go prosperously. And alas! How utterly calamitous is that thing that occurs when the body of this woman falls! For, verily, far yonder in the length of the file will the file of our grandchildren be removed! These our grandchildren who run hither and thither in sport, these our grandchildren who by creeping drag themselves about in the dust, these our grandchildren whose bodies are slung to cradle-boards, and even those of them whose faces are looking hitherward as they come under the ground.[1]

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The identifiable cemeteries of Seriland are few and small—much less populous than might be expected of a tribe numbering several hundreds for centuries, and able to maintain well-worn trails threading all parts of their rugged domain. Three graves were noted near the abandoned rancheria at Puzo Escalante; one was observed near a jacal skeleton at Barranca Salina; five or six were made out doubtfully on a low spur adjacent to Punta Antigualla; another was found near the rancheria midway thence to Punta Yguacio; still another was doubtfully identified hard by a ruinous jacal just where the foothills of Sierra Seri descend to the plain stretching toward Punta Miguel; and this distribution may be deemed representative. A scant half-dozen perceptible graves were observed near the considerable rancheria of Punta Narragansett, which was numerously inhabited during the Dewey surveys of 1873; one was found adjoining the old jacal near Campo Navidad; but none were discovered in connection with the extensive rancheria on Bahia Ballena. The largest known cemetery occupies the triangular point of shrub-dotted plain pushing out toward the site of the old rancheria at the base of Punta Tormenta; it comprises perhaps a score of evidently ancient graves, while two newer ones were found on the pebble bar beyond the jacales. When near the pebbly beaches the graves are marked by heaps of pebbles and small cobbles, commonly about the size of those used as hupfa, these cairns being 3 or 4 feet long, two-thirds as wide, and seldom over 12 or 15 inches in height; and most of the cairns are accompanied and enlarged by piles (ranging from a peck to a bushel) of the scatophagic shells already noted. The graves remote from pebbly beaches are marked by heaps of cholla stems and branches, rudely thatched with miscellaneous brambles roughly pinned

[1] Given in the archives of the Bureau of American Ethnology. A somewhat more elaborate version was recorded by Hale in "The Iroquois Book Rites": "Now, there is another thing we say, we younger brothers. He who has worked for us has gone afar off, and he also will in time take with him all these—the whole body of warriors and also the whole body of women—they will go with him. But it is still harder when the women shall die, because with her the line is lost. And also the grandchildren and the little ones who are running around—these he will take away; and also those that are creeping on the ground, and also those that are on the cradle-boards; all these he will take away with him." (Brinton's Library of Aboriginal American Literature, number vi, 1883, pp. 145-147.)

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764 together by okatilla stems, the shocks being sometimes nearly as high and broad as the jacales. A few of the scatophagic shells were found about the bramble-marked graves at Pozo Escalante, and a single one [768] at Barranca Salina. In general the association of cemeteries and rancherias, or of graves and jacales, indicates that habitations are usually abandoned for a time when a death occurs within or near [415] them.

FIG. 89.—Mortuary olla.

The most conspicuous cairn seen in Seriland was well within Tiburon. It stands on the southern side of a little rock-butte about a mile and a half east-southeast of Tinaja Anita, south of the main arroyo, and near where the trail from the tinaja bifurcates toward Arroyo Carrizal and Punta Narragansett, respectively. It is shadowed by a notably large and widespreading paloverde, and is in the form of a cone estimated at 7 feet in height and 18 or 20 feet across the base. The materials, at least on the surface, are rounded pebbles and cobbles, possibly from the adjacent arroyos, though more probably from the beaches, of which the nearest is miles away. It was not determined to be mortuary.[1]

On the death of the matron, a grave is scooped out by means of shells

[126] [1] As an indication of the conditions for observation in Seriland, this cairn is fairly typical: it was seen but once (on December 23, 1895), and the observation was limited to a few minutes by the attendant circumstances. On the evening before the party landed at Campo Navidad, with the hope of working up the coast nearly or quite to Punta Tormenta on the following day; but before morning a downbay gale was whitening the waters of Bahia Kunkaak so fiercely as to prohibit embarkation. Meantime the supply of water—that standard commodity of arid regions—was too nearly exhausted to permit inaction; so while Mr Johnson with three guards ascended the Sierra to establish a new topographic station, the leader of the party with the remaining seven men set out in search of water. The nearest known aguaje was that of Arroyo Carrizal; but under the hypothesis that some of the better-beaten trails turning northward might lead to nearer water, one of them was taken; and after turning back from half a dozen false courts, the principal trail was followed to the well-known Tinaja Anita, 18 miles by the trail from Campo Navidad; and here the party watered. It was on the return trip that the cairn was discovered; but the party were laden with filled canteens and canvas-jars and cullapots, the day was well spent, and the camp more than a dozen miles distant even over the air line traversing spall-sprinkled tableau and sharp-edged rocks; moreover, the men were naturally and necessarily heavily armed and on constant guard. Accordingly even the short stay and scrutiny notes involved an additional mile of darkness on a trail so rough as to cut through shoe-soles and sandals, and catch scents of blood to tempt coyotes to the camp site. Thus it was that the cairn was not more critically examined and is not more fully described.

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764 a few yards from her jacal, preference being given to relatively elevated or commanding points. The excavation is about 30 inches (90 cm.) in depth; within it is placed first the pelican-skin robe of the deceased, so arranged as to fold over the body; then the corpse, dressed in the ordinary costume of life, is compressed into small compass by closely flexing the knees and bringing them against the thorax, extending the arms around and along the lower limbs so that hands and feet are together, and bending the head forward on the chest; when it is deposited in the receptacle in such manner as to lie on the left side, facing north-

[532]
[778]

FIG. 40.—Woman's fetishes.

ward. Near the face is laid a dish of baked clay or a large shell filled with food, and beside it a small olla of water (an actual example is shown in figure 39), while the hupf, awls, hairbrush, olla-ring, and other domestic paraphernalia are placed near the hands. Next the personal-fetishes and votive symbols (in the form of puppets or dolls such as those shown in figure 40 *a* and *b*) of the dead mother are slipped beneath the face, and her paint-cup, with a plentiful supply of paint, is added; the poor personal possessions, in the form of shell-beads and miscellaneous trinketry, are then heaped over the face and shoulders, and these are covered with the superfluous garments and miscellaneous

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31



property of the deceased. Finally the pelican-pelt bedding is folded over the body, and two turtle-shells are laid over all as a kind of coffin, when the grave is carefully filled, and the ground so smoothed as to leave no mark of the burial. During subsequent hours the stones for the cairn or the cholla-joints and other brambles for the brush-heap are piled over the spot, while the scatophagic shells are added at intervals apparently for weeks or months and perhaps for years after the burial.

FIG. 41.—Food for the long journey.

The mortuary food is carefully selected for appropriate qualities (i. e., for "strength" in the notion of the mourners). It comprises portions of turtle-flippers, and, if practicable, a chunk of charred plastron—the food substance especially associated with long and hard journeys—with a few fresh mollusks, and, judging from a single good example as well as from analogy, one or two scatophagic shells. The remains of a funerary feast are illustrated in figures 41 and 42, the latter being the scatophagic receptacle utilized apparently in the absence of the customary Noah's ark. It may be significant that this shell is perforated at the apex, evidently by long wave-wear before utilization, and that the accompanying olla bears marks of having been broken, then repaired, and afterward perforated, as illustrated in the photo-mechanical reproduction (figure 39); for these features perhaps express that idea of "killing" mortuary sacrifices, ostensibly to fit them to the condition of the deceased, though really (in subconscious practicality) to protect the sepulcher from predation.[1]

FIG. 42.—Mortuary cup.

[1] "In all stages of development belief runs a close race against cupidity, and is sometimes distanced; so the sages learn that even a buried weapon may be a source of contention, which they thenceforward forestall by breaking or burning it." (Primitive Trephining in Peru; Sixteenth Ann. Rep., Bureau of American Ethnology, 1897, p. 32.)

773 Before this it was day all the time, but then it became night and coyote only laughs at night. The black strings still hang about badger's neck."

It is strange to find, too, that a flood legend is traditional among the Seris. Chico said: "In the times of the ancients a great flood came, the ocean rose up and all the country of the Seris was under water except the top of Cerro Alto. There a few Seris gathered and were saved. Everyone else was drowned. To this day the top of Cerro Alto is covered with brush which the flood did not submerge. All Seri children are taught this flood tradition, and they must learn it by heart so as to teach their children and their grandchildren."

764 The death of a tribesman gives no cause for ceremony among the Seris, although the [765] nearest relatives may customarily wail, sometimes for months, morning and evening. The disposal of the bodies of the dead, is, however, of considerable interest. A hole about [412] three feet deep is dug by means of large clam shells and a cave is excavated for the head such that the earth will not touch it. The deceased Indian is wrapped in his own blanket and laid in the grave with the head to the East, face up. The body is covered and the grave is partly filled with earth, then covered with a layer of the spiniest of chollas and thorny brush, further filled, leveled and covered with another layer of chollas to discourage the coyotes from digging up the body. When the Seris are on the move, how- [766] ever, and grave-digging is too great a task, a body may simply be lifted high to the fork of a giant cactus and left there.

583 Marriage among the Seris is not so much
585 a ceremony as it is the completion of a bargain. Under ordinary circumstances, when a man buys a woman he strikes a bargain with the bride's parents and makes a down payment. Only after completion of the bargain does the woman go to live with the man, but even then payments do not cease but continue intermittently through life. Chico Romero, although "married" for fifteen years, gave his wife's father some paint that he had received in payment for guiding and
425 packing. It is also considered natural to
858 buy and sell children. One Seri, Santo

[p. 266 (B)]
[Text continues on p. 267 (B)]

5:Dawson N-5 (1940) 1944 NU31 Seri NU31

of nutritious material which was ground to powder on their stone ahsts, winnowed in shallow baskets and made into a meal or paste.

The abundant cacti of many species served several other functions in the domestic economy of the Seris. The thorny cholla whose insipid fruits were not fit to eat and whose spines were a constant threat to the unprotected bodies of the Serjs, found one use, nevertheless, in the burial procedure. After a body was partly covered with earth in the three foot deep grave, it was densely overlaid with chollas before leveling, to discourage the coyotes from digging for the body.

The dry skeletons of the giant cacti provided the long, cylindrical poles used in knocking off ripe pitahayas as well as in all other instances in which a straight, slender pole was needed. Since the advent of the open boat in modern times, the cactus skeleton has come in for a new use, for after trituration between stone ahst and hupf, it was found to yield a satisfactory caulking compound when mixed with sea-lion oil.

The barrel-cacti, *Ferocactus Wislizenii* and *F. Coulteri*, though ordinarily abundant on the Sonoran desert are rare in Seriland and practically absent from Isla Tiburon where they may easily have been exterminated by the improvident Seris during their centuries of occupancy on account of their recognized value as water providers on the wastelands over which the Seris so frequently ventured.

These Indians found housing no problem, for, living under a climate in which frost is rare and rain infrequent, they found little need for shelters except for protection against the blazing desert sun. Camps that were occupied for more than a day or two, however, usually saw the appearance of a group of crude sun shelters. These were usually made of long, flexible ocotillo branches, *Fouquieria splendens*, stuck in the sand and fashioned into an arched framework over which a more or less complete covering of brush was piled. If, by the sea, a windbreak were desired, the brush top and siding were usually augmented by the addition of several empty turtle shells.

On the delta plain of the Rio Sonora, the mesquite, *Prosopis juliflora*, grows in remarkable luxuriance, these gnarled, spiny trees forming an almost continuous open forest 20-40 feet high. Its fruit, consisting of small, hard beans borne in slender, woody pods forms a concentrated, starchy food that the Seris found highly nutritious if not appetizing. In late summer when all fresh vegetable food had withered and disappeared, provided the turtle fisheries had not yet attracted them back to their island, they often spent some weeks gathering the beans and grinding them into a meal which was eaten as a watery atole or as a paste mixed with sea-lion oil. The more straggly and thorny cat's claw mesquite, *Acacia Greggii*, and the ironwood, *Olneya tesota*, also yielded woody beans in limited quantity.

In the deeper gorges of the mountains the Seris found *Guaiacum Coulteri* yielding a berry of medicinal properties and also *Jacquinia pungens* which produced a nut, edible when not quite ripe, and forming a favorite rattlehead when dry.

Along sandy washes, particularly on the lower flood plain of the llano grows a low, shrubby weed, *Hymenoclea monogyra*. Although during times of drought it shrinks to stunted tussocks, after periods of heavy rain its flourishing fens produce abundant seeds eaten both by the beasts of the plain and formerly by the Seris.

Before the advent of the tin can and the cardboard carton, basketry was



[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 138 --Quails]

# War Chief of the Seris

622 765 There is sorrow and mourning on that little known island in the Gulf of California, Tiburon.

[168] During the last few years, many of the Seri tribesmen have succumbed to influenza and pneumonia, and many a night has the weird and melancholy wailing for the dead mingled with the soft lapping of the waters of the Gulf on the shores of that lovely desert isle.

But now a universal grief has overtaken the remnants of a once powerful and warlike tribe---Juan Tomas (*Pik-tan-aohe*, "Very Brave" in his own language)---the old War Chief of the Seris, is no more. He has fought a last and losing battle. For a month, maybe for several months, the women will wail and lament, and around the tribal camp fires, for many a night, the Seris will tell of his exploits and miraculous escapes, as they told Roberto Thomson, their friend and advisor.

[169] The old Chief died on the shores of Kino Bay opposite Alcatraz Island, probably of pneumonia.

There was no soft mattress to lie upon, no pillow to rest his head, and no roof to shelter him from sun or storm. His bed was the sand of the sea shore; his canopy, the blue heavens above, and his [163] requiem, the solemn beating of the surf on the shore. His last words were to his grand-nephews to inherit the *Sierra de las Tinajas*, and he asked the Indians and his *Yori* (Mexican) friends to protect his nephews and the mountains.

622 764 His body was wrapped in an old *serape*, fastened around by rope of native fibre. His grave was dug with paddles from the canoes, four and one-half feet deep in the sand hills near the sea. He was placed in the grave with his head to the north, face up, with the carapace of a sea turtle covering his head. Amid much lamentation and mourning, the grave was partially filled, and then a heavy layer of *cholla* cactus spread over. The grave was then filled and mounded up and covered with *chollas*, *mesquite*, shells, and thorny growths, and also a five-gallon can. The cactus spines were to discourage coyotes.